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**WASHINGTON, DC** – The following is a statement from Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04), regarding the Senate Republican obstruction of the federal benefits extension legislation for the unemployed.

“Thursday night, one Republican U.S. Senator blocked the federal benefits extension legislation Minnesota families desperately need. It is outrageous that the Republicans are playing politics with the livelihoods of the millions of unemployed Americans across the country. It is time for the U.S. Senate to immediately help the millions of Americans who are out of work by passing an extension of unemployment benefits and the COBRA subsidy.

“In Minnesota alone, over 200,000 people are requesting unemployment insurance each week. The reality is that these hurting families will have to figure out how to keep their homes and feed their families while Republican Senator Jim Bunning (R-KY) makes his political point. Senator Bunning claims to be standing on principle – the truth is he is standing in the way of millions of American families’ ability to access these emergency funds.

“The current benefits all expire in only two days and our unemployed workers – many who are out of work because of no fault of their own – need this safety net. Too many American families

are in crisis and need our help. The Senate must not keep them waiting and worrying. Last December, I voted for the Jobs for Main Street Act (H.R. 2847), which extended the availability of unemployment and the COBRA subsidy for six months, but, again, the Senate has yet to act.

“The Senate just passed a much-needed \$15 billion jobs bill, but they did not include an unemployment extension for those who are out of work. Congress must do something, and extending benefits for one or two months at a time is a band-aid approach that only adds uncertainty for families and states. States need much longer than 30 days to administrate these benefits. With the expiration only days away, many unemployed workers have already received notices from the states that the programs are ending, which will happen again and again without a long-term extension. Congress is creating an administrative nightmare with these short extensions, and I support a long-term extension of at least six months but preferably for a year.”

*Congresswoman Betty McCollum serves on the House Appropriations and Budget Committees.*

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